



# LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Kimberly A. Foster  
Executive Director

**COMMISSIONERS:**  
CAROL O. BIONDI  
PATRICIA CURRY  
ANN FRANZEN, VICE CHAIR  
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HELEN A. KLEINBERG  
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TINA PEDERSEN, LCSW  
MARTHA TREVINO POWELL  
SANDRA RUDNICK  
STACEY SAVELLE, VICE CHAIR  
ADELINA SORKIN, LCSW/ACSW, CHAIR  
DR. HARRIETTE F. WILLIAMS  
TRULA J. WORTHY-CLAYTON, VICE CHAIR

## APPROVED MINUTES

The General Meeting of the Commission for Children and Families was held on Monday, **July 21, 2008**, in Room 739 of the Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration, 500 West Temple Street, Los Angeles. **Please note that these minutes are intended as a summary and not as a verbatim transcription of events at this meeting.**

### **COMMISSIONERS PRESENT (Quorum Established)**

Carol O. Biondi	Tina Pedersen
Patricia Curry	Martha Trevino Powell
Susan Friedman	Sandra Rudnick
Helen Kleinberg	Adelina Sorkin
Reverend Cecil Murray	Trula J. Worthy-Clayton
Steven M. Olivas	

### **COMMISSIONERS ABSENT (Excused/Unexcused)**

Ann Franzen	Stacey Savelle
Dr. La-Doris McClaney	Dr. Harriette F. Williams

#### **I. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Commissioner Sorkin, Chair.

#### **II. INTRODUCTIONS**

Introductions of the audience were made.

#### **III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

The Agenda for the July 21, 2008 meeting was unanimously approved.

#### **IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The Minutes for the June 16, 2008 meeting were unanimously approved.

The Minutes for the July 7, 2008 meeting were unanimously approved.

**V. CHAIR'S REPORT**

1. The Commission unanimously approved the Letter to the Board of Supervisors Regarding Commission Support of Inter-Agency Information Automation with slight modifications.
2. Committee Assignments - the Chair assigned the following Commissioners to represent the Commission:
  - Children's Planning Council – The Commission voted for Commissioner Steven Olivas, Esq. to represent the Commission.
  - Nomination Committee– Held
  - Retreat Committee (October 6, 2008) – Commissioner Steven Olivas, Esq., will Chair the Committee. Based on her availability, Commissioner Tina Pedersen will also be on the Committee.
3. Establishment of the following Commission Committees was unanimously approved:
  - 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary (April 10, 1984) – Commissioner Helen Kleinberg and Commissioner Martha Trevino Powell will co-Chair this Committee.
  - Mental Health Committee – Patricia Curry will Chair the Committee.
4. Executive Director, Kimberly Foster introduced the new Commission Secretary, Cynthia Ocampo and provided a brief overview of her work experience.

**VI. DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Ted Myers, Chief Deputy Director, gave the Director's Report in the absence of Trish Ploehn. He informed the Commission that he has been visiting the regional offices and getting an informal assessment of the Department. He stated that he was impressed with what he observed (i.e. service delivery, change in Social Worker interaction with clients, TDMs, and family and stakeholder engagement for case planning). Although there is better planning, better engagement and better outcomes, there are still challenges; they are working on a better collaborative attitude between offices, and between offices and headquarters. The administrative process also does not reflect the transformed practice of engaging stakeholders equitably.

**VII. COURT PERSPECTIVE ON VISITATION**

Judge Zeke Zeidler (Edelman Dependency Court) gave a PowerPoint presentation on the court visitation protocol. Judge Zeidler provided background on the creation of the committee and the participants (the Commission, DCFS, court representatives, legal advocates, etc.).

The Commission was informed that a Sub-Committee was created to develop a written Family Visitation Plan to be attached to court reports and to be consistent with court orders. Developmental Visitation Guidelines were included to address children at different ages and developmental stages, how often they need to spend time with their

parents, and how it relates to child development, bonding and reunification. There are also protocols included to help with visitation in specific instances such as incarcerated parents, parents in inpatient drug treatment programs, etc.

The guidelines were completed and an Implementation Sub-Committee was formed with short and long term goals. The short term implementation issues require no additional resources or resources that can be accessed quickly; the longer term implementation issues require resources not readily available. The most important short term goal was creating a written visitation plan.

Judge Zeidler expressed concern about DCFS' lack of responsiveness in the implementation of the approved court visitation protocol and the overall lack of detailed information in court reports. He stated that the law requires that the Social Worker's Status Review Reports include what services have been provided towards reunification, what is the nature of the parent's visitation, and compliance with the case plan. The absence of this information has resulted in barriers to the court's ability to create a disposition case plan.

In addition, the Commission strongly expressed their disappointment with the lack of implementation by DCFS of short term goals. They asked DCFS to address the barriers for implementation, sanctions, and union issues; as well as the specific use of Human Services Aides (HSAs) and how their efforts regarding visitation will be communicated to the court.

Commissioner Kleinberg expressed her disappointment that although DCFS has participated in the meetings and in writing the guidelines, they are not implemented. Another issue she brought up is the mental health of children when they are not seeing their siblings or their families. Judge Zeidler agreed that sibling visits are crucial in terms of adoptability issues and the mental development of the children.

#### **VIII. PRESENTATION – DCFS UPDATE ON VISITATION**

Angela Carter, DCFS Deputy Director, introduced Colleen Mooney, a community partner who has helped to pilot visitation centers through the prevention initiative. Angela Carter stated that DCFS agrees with the concerns that Judge Zeidler voiced and she provided a brief update of actions underway to correct the concerns and improve the practice. She pointed out that progress has been made in terms of reunification within 12 months from 49% in 2005, to 61% in 2007. DCFS has also hired a manager to support the regional offices and have hired 171 of the 200 budgeted HSAs. They are also now including community partners and Commissioners in their internal meetings.

In response to the concerns raised by Judge Zeidler and the Commission, Colleen Mooney, who works with the South Bay Center for Counseling in SPA 8, provided a brief overview of their efforts. Their response to the concerns regarding visitation included funding by the prevention initiative, working with the Faith-Based Community,

and opening visitation centers. The Commission acknowledged the efforts of Ms. Mooney and thanked her for the presentation.

Ted Myers also stated that he has facilitated meetings with SPA 1 and the visitation program is expanding with the utilization of community resources and churches.

Commissioner Curry suggested revisiting the obstacles identified as union issues and suggested advocating for the use of PEI money to use in training caregivers.

Commissioners Pedersen and Kleinberg questioned whether training is available for both new and existing Social Workers in creating a quality visitation plan, as well as training caregivers to address the needs of the children. Angela Carter indicated that this is included in the Training Academy and also includes the HSAs. Ongoing in-service training is provided in the offices as well.

Commissioner Sorkin called for closing remarks and reemphasized the importance of having a visitation plan since visitation is at the heart of reunification.

**IX. DISCUSSION – JULY 9, 2008 DCFS AND PROBATION SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT PLANNING (SIP) MEETING**

Commissioners Kleinberg, Worthy-Clayton and Sorkin provided the Commission with an update on the SIP. The Commissioners reported that many of the attendees expressed concern about the lack of collaboration from DCFS, and the lack of sufficient time for stakeholder feedback allotted for the SIP Meeting. The Commissioners shared that the stakeholders are concerned about the multiple DCFS initiatives and the lack of inclusion in such initiatives as TDMs. The Commissioners further stated there are concerns about the re-entry rate for Family Reunification cases. In addition, there was no analysis provided for the data presented by DCFS, and they neglected to mention that the plan was going to be presented to the Board of Supervisors immediately after the meeting.

Mitch Mason of DCFS responded to the Commissioners concerns by acknowledging the lack of time for questions from the stakeholders and informed the Commissioners that a second SIP is in the process of being planned to ensure that stakeholders have an opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback. Mitch explained that a commitment was made to come up with a comparable process to look at the reentry rate and they will provide a qualitative review and report back to the Commission in six months.

**X. PUBLIC COMMENTS**  
No Public Comments.

**XI. MEETING ADJOURNED**